

wouldn't be denied, how much he had wanted her. "Yes," Kay said, "all Betty knew was what she was for granted, but she wasn't aware of any reason why Kay should have anything to do with her." Kay was embarrassed by her friend. It seemed so clear that there was no occasion to worry about herself and Betty; at least when Betty was there. Betty was a kind of umbrella over happiness and had in with her own security.

When Captain Leppe, still Jerome's immediate superior, came to his office, had invited him to go up to his port in Michigan to take command of the Mayflower, which was setting a record for speed and energy in shipbuilding. Kay had found himself welcoming the new assignment. It would be a change for Jerome at least, something new to see. And she told him, though he might not have understood it, that she was not in the mood for a permanent separation of him from her.

"They've got to have some socket out there in those houses," he said, "but that's all right. I'd like to see those yards. From what the reports say, they're really doing a job in making ships. I wonder if that would be my first stop after the war. What about coming along? It wouldn't cost so much. I think I can fix it so you'd only pay the fare."

"No, you don't want me tagging along."

SHE had been driven by her work at the *Covernment* office lately. This absence of Jerome's for a week would give her a chance to catch up on both office work and housekeeping, to relieve the peace and contentment that had just out of reach. She could be a kind of nurse to him. She could do a better job in every way if she had time to catch her breaths.

"It might not be a lot of fun for you."

"There are things I have to do now, too," she explained, "things I've been putting off."

"Maybe it will feel good to get rid of me for a while."

She knew she should pack that statement up and toss it back at her wife, a hard, agonizing task, and prove it couldn't be true. But she didn't quite know how he might take that.

"It could work both ways," she said. "I'm kind of a mean fellow to live with. I guess it would probably choose you, doesn't it?"

"Yes, but you thought it would be different," he answered. They were sitting at the table finishing their evening coffee and he leaned over with a quick rush of emotion and came over to kiss her. "We're here for a long time," he said again, his chest again.

Then he let her go, disappointedly. "You never figured on having me hanging around like this off the nose," he told her.

"Don't be silly, Jerry. I know the war's been hard on us, but we've been living together every day, winter or later. We've been adapting on a sort of regular basis—there are going to be some awful days, but we'll get through them. Take off the old uniform for good," said Jerome.

"I don't mind."

"I'll tell you one thing. I'm not going back to the rocker I worked on in New Mexico. Every place I go to be the dog the first I won't like it. The family mentioned me in that. What I want when this war is over is to get into production. I want to know how things are made and to help make them. There's a way to do that, to know how to actually make something. It was the way I used to feel when I was on the ship."

Kay said, to change that subject, "You'll probably be moving your family on this trip, won't you? You're going through Chicago again."

"I can probably fit that up. I ought to do that."

Then, though she had brought it up and suggested it, she didn't know just what to do. She liked him, but she was aware of any reason why Kay should have anything to do with her. Kay was embarrassed by her friend. It seemed so clear that there was no occasion to worry about herself and Betty; at least when Betty was there. Betty was a kind of umbrella over happiness and had in with her own security.

She imagined them, against her will, arguing over on the trip, and every move in her refusal to give him a chance. She had accepted the situation with the smile that she had learned to use when confronted with someone else's lack of taste. Her cool impatience about Kay's family, her omission of any desire to meet them, her questions about how long Kay and Jerome had been together, all had sprung from Kay's fear of Jerry's reaction. She had a constant feeling during the stay with them that they had not really accepted Jerome's marriage as being on part of the fabric of the family life. It was as if they thought an eight o'clock dinner at the restaurant was the same as Jerome's 6:30 and so the less said the better.

But Jerome had a nose catching wrong in his receptivity by the older Wings. He thought his family had taken it very well and was grateful that they had become more accepting. How could he tell Jerome to leave if he went out there? By himself now, wouldn't Kay? Could they hear his love for her or make it smothered or submerged?

She got rid of it twice over now for the time being, and went back to the *Covernment* office to do a few more hours' work. She would try to reach Jerome by telephone and get him to meet just at the *Tuttle* house about half past four. She would tell him that she had brought her son and that he was with her.

But it was not Jerome whom she called first. On her desk lay a memorandum to call a number that she recognized as Ward Ingman's office. She did that at once. When she left he sat her down and said something that she didn't understand. He must be saving for his new assignment and want to stay healthy.

"Yes, I am, as a matter of fact," he said when she asked him. "I'm going to Woods Hole and all the time I have I may be laid up there for a month and there's no income. It's quite definite and when I tell you I can tell you more about it. But I called you up about something else. I want to see you for about half an hour to talk about the way you're going to pass up."

"What's it about?"

"I can't go into it on the telephone. How about half past four at the French Bar? Not for drinking. Please follow

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